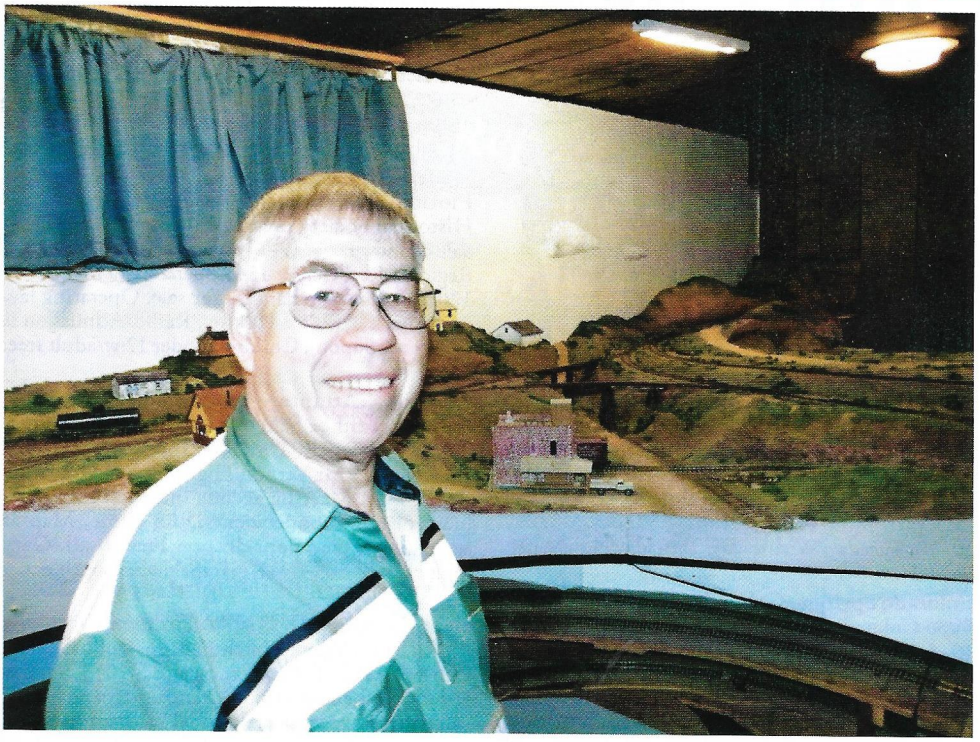

MARK MALMKAR EARNS MMR #604

I've been fascinated by trains as long as I can remember. I still recall seeing Union Pacific steam engines when visiting my grandparents in Ogallala, Nebraska. I've eaten breakfast under glass in the dome diner on the *City of Denver.* Luck was with me to get a cab ride in a Burlington E5 when traveling to Kansas City. My wife, Chris, and I have taken dozens of Amtrak trips.

Model railroading for me started at age 10 with a typical Christmas present of a Marx HO train set, which I still have. Early inspiration during elementary school came from the manager of a department store in Ogallala who built a display layout every Christmas. Who could encourage a 12-year-old more than Les Roneker — a gentleman in my hometown — who invited me over to see his 6x9 layout. Charles Hake owned the hobby shop in my boyhood town of Grant, Nebraska. I'd visit his store two or three times a week, and sometimes I had allowance money to spend.

Also typical of many model railroaders, I started but seldom finished home layouts due to several life factors: college, a 14-year teaching career, a 30-year career in manufacturing, and several moves to new towns and houses. My first layout was the typical 4x8 layout, which did get finished—enough for a teenager. Several more false starts finally turned into reality with a basement layout in the 1980s.

The beginning segments of that 1980s layout have been with me in three houses, and it came via rental truck from Nebraska to our new home in Oak Harbor, Washington. It was designed in modular segments and, as of this writing, it is being reassembled with new additions.

My favorite part of railroading — both prototype and modeling — is passenger cars. Until the last eight years, my passenger car fleet has outnumbered my freight cars two-to-one. I also like to spend time with scenery. That's why the layout's location of choice is the Colorado Rockies from Colorado Springs to Glenwood Springs over the old Colorado Midland Route. Mel McFarland and the Colorado Midland Modeling group were greatly helpful during the many conventions and trips over the old right-of-way.

The chosen era is 1955. The layout has 60 feet of Rock Island main line from a modeled yard of Belleville, Kansas, to a wye at Roswell and a yard at Colorado Springs. (I believe my model *Rocky Mountain Rocket* should run through the Rockies, not just bump up to them.) From Colorado Springs up Ute pass, the modeled portion will extend through a short helix to a second level and end at a staging yard at Glenwood Springs. Iconic Colorado Midland scenes are to be Basalt, Cardiff, and a branch line to Cripple Creek. I use modeler's license to scenic those stations as they were around 1910. The Cripple Creek track and scenery is complete.

Five groups of terrific men and women have encouraged and inspired me since my quest for MMR began. Charles Buswell (MMR 265) explained the Achievement Program to me and judged my first Merit Award — you guessed it, a passenger car. While living in the Nebraska panhandle, I had the opportunity to work with a group of friends in the Nebraska West Central Division of the NMRA. I miss meeting with the modelers in the Scottsbluff club. I also miss the frequent gatherings of the Grant/Ogallala railroad club.

While living in Kearney, Nebraska, for 19 years, the friends and modelers of the Tri-Cities Model Railroad Association were a true encouragement. The members of the Platte Valley Division of the NMRA were tremendously helpful in my achieving MMR. Special thanks goes to you fellows who judged all my models for AP.

When I moved from Nebraska, I was one Merit Award away from meeting the MMR requirements. Six of my seven certificates were awarded in the Mid-Continent Region. I am proud to have been a part of that Region, but I've found a bunch of new friends in the Fourth Division of the Pacific Northwest Region. Thanks to the clinic groups in Oak Harbor and Mount Vernon for helping me get over the last summit.

It took until age 45 to begin my formal journey to MMR, and during that time, it was typical of many modelers. If you have started and sputtered over the years, don't give up. Start again, or start today.

Certificates Earned
Mark Malmkar

Association Volunteer
Model Railroad Author
Chief Dispatcher
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Master Builder Scenery
Master Builder Cars
Master Builder Structures